693 The councillor, the court and the police are only a last resort in
serious quarrels. I saw a councillor enter a dispute once, playing a
629 mediating role between disputants from two villages, but without
playing more than an advisory role. One quarrel was taken to court,
but this was not a case where traditional mechanisms of social control
683 had failed. A woman accused her husband of adultery with one of the
new Garoubi arrivals. She and the husband fought and had to be
626 separated as the lady had an axe; the domestic dispute soon died down
but the Garoubi woman laid a complaint for slander with the police.
Before this came to court, the wife had been roundly condemned by
almost everyone in the village; she had repented, had gone round the
village to signify her regrets, and been as contrite as her pride
could possibly allow her to be. The court let her off with a reprimand.
The episode, far from suggesting a flagging of Orokaiva traditional
social control, had demonstrated to me that it was still effective.
177 Nonetheless, the Orokaiva, as so many other peoples in contact with
627 Western civilisation, have been quick to see the advantages of a
judicial system providing an impartial arbiter in disputes, to whose
decisions both parties will defer. At the moment, this western
judicial system is an additional resource of Orokaiva law, without
undermining its existing institutions.